

Sūrah An-Najm

(The Star)

This Sūrah is Makkī. It contains 62 verses and 3 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 18

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ ﴿١﴾ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ
عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴿٣﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ
﴿٥﴾ ذُو مِرَّةٍ ۖ فَاسْتَوَىٰ ﴿٦﴾ وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ دَنَىٰ
فَتَدَلَّىٰ ﴿٨﴾ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ ﴿٩﴾ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا
أَوْحَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾ مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ ﴿١١﴾ أَفَتُمَرُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ
﴿١٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾ عِنْدَهَا
جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾ إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾ مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ
وَمَا طَغَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾ لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿١٨﴾

By the star when it goes down to set, [1] your companion (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) has neither missed the way, nor did he deviate. [2] And he does not speak out of (his own) desire. [3] It is not but revelation revealed (to him). [4] It is taught to him by one (angel) of strong faculties, [5] one of vigour. So he stood poised, [6] while he was on the upper horizon. [7] Then he drew near, and came down, [8] so as he was at a distance between two bows (joined together), rather even nearer. [9] Thus He (Allah) revealed to His slave what He

revealed. [10] The heart did not err in what he saw. [11] Do you quarrel with him in what he sees? [12] And indeed he saw him another time [13] by *sidrat-ul-muntaha* (the lote-tree in the upper realm), [14] near which there is *Jannat-ul-ma'wa* (the Paradise of Abode), [15] when the lote-tree was covered by that which covered it. [16] The eye neither went wrong, nor did exceed the limit. [17] He has indeed seen a part of the biggest signs of your Lord. [18]

Characteristics of Sūrah An-Najm

Sūrah An-Najm is the first chapter that the Holy Prophet ﷺ proclaimed in Makkah ('Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ has transmitted it - as in Qurṭubī) and this is the first Sūrah in which a verse of *sajdah* (prostration) is revealed. The Holy Prophet ﷺ recited it and prostrated. A strange thing happened on this occasion: When the Holy Prophet ﷺ finished reciting the Sūrah before a mixed gathering of Muslims and disbelievers, and, along with his followers, he prostrated himself on the ground. The disbelievers too prostrated, except one proud and arrogant man (regarding whose name there is a difference of opinion (Tr.)) who took a handful of soil and, having applied it on his forehead, said, 'this is enough'. 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ [the transmitter of the Tradition] said that he saw this man lying dead in the state of disbelief [*kufr*]. (Bukhārī, Muslim and other compilers of Sunan - Ibn-Kathīr [condensed])

At the outset of this Sūrah, the truth of the Qur'ānic revelation and of the Divine claim is sought to be established. In a very exquisite and forceful style, it is stated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a true Messenger of Allah, and there is no room for any doubt about this.

Allah Swears that the Messenger is True

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ (By the star when it goes down to set,... 53:1) The word *najm* means a star, and as a common noun every star is referred to as *najm*, and in that case the plural is *nujum*. There are however occasions when *najm* specifically refers to *thurayyā*. In this case it is used as a proper noun and it signifies "the Pleiades" which is a loose cluster of many (hundred) stars, (six of which are visible to ordinary sight). In this context, some scholars, taking the word as a proper noun, interpret *najm* as *thurayyā*. Farrā' and Ḥasan Baṣrī prefer the first interpretation, and take the word as a common noun (Qurṭubī). This is the interpretation that

is adopted in the translation.

The verb *hawā* means to fall or plunge. When stars fall, they set. In this verse Allah swears an oath to show that the Messenger is true, and his words are a revelation from Allah, in which there is no room for any doubt. In Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣāffāt it has been explained in detail that the Creator, for various wise reasons, swears by whatever He wills among His creation, but His created beings only swear by the Creator. They are not allowed to swear by anything else. Here Allah has sworn an oath by the stars. Probably, the underlying wisdom in this is that as the Arabs are used to determine the course and direction of, and are guided in their travels by the movements of the stars in the sandy waste of Arabia, so they would now be led to the goal and end of their spiritual journey by the star *par excellence*, that is, by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

مَاضِلٌ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى (your companion [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] has neither missed the way, nor did he deviate. [53:2] Verse [1] was *qasam* or oath and verse [2] is *jawāb-ul-qasam* or the subject for which oath is sworn. The verse means that the path towards which the Holy Prophet ﷺ is calling the people is the perfectly straight path leading to the desired goal of Allah's good pleasure. He is following the right guidance and has not deviated from the path of righteousness.

The Reason for Describing the Holy Prophet ﷺ as 'your companion'

The Qur'ān on this occasion, when referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, does not refer to him by his blessed name or refer to him as a Messenger or a Holy Prophet. In fact, it refers to him as *Ṣāhibukum* or "your companion". In this there seems to be a subtle rebuke to the pagans of Makkah, telling them in effect that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not an outsider, nor a stranger to them. He was their constant companion. He was born amongst them, he spent his childhood amongst them, and he grew up as a youth amongst them. He has lived among them a whole life-time, and they had always looked upon him as a paragon of honesty, integrity and truthfulness calling him "أمين" (The Honest One). But now – after his claim of Prophethood – they dare impute to him such a heinous sin as forging lies against Allah. A man who withheld himself from telling lies about men, how could he possibly forge lies against Allah? How inconsistent is their attitude?

The Holy Prophet's Words are a Revelation from Allah

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ (And he does not speak out of (his own) desire. It is not but revelation revealed [to him]....53:3-4) The verses tell us that it is absolutely impossible for the Messenger ﷺ to forge lies and impute them to Allah. Nothing he utters is of his own wish or desire. He only conveys to the people what he was commanded to convey, in its entirety, without additions or deletions. An analysis of the various Traditions in Bukhārī indicates that there are many categories or types of *wahy* [inspiration or revelation]. Type one is that in which the wordings and the meaning are both directly from Allah. This is called Qur'ān. Type two is the one in which only the meaning comes from Allah, and the Messenger ﷺ expresses the meaning in his own words. This is called Ḥadīth or Sunnah [Tradition]. The subject of Ḥadīth, which comes from Allah, sometimes lays down injunctions or rules of conduct in clear and express terms, and at other times it establishes a general principle from which the Messenger ﷺ derives laws on the basis of *ijtihād* or analogy, and promulgates them. In this there does exist the possibility of mistake of judgement. But it is the characteristic of the Messenger ﷺ and other Prophets ﷺ that if they commit any error of judgement, Allah sends down a revelation to amend it, so that they do not unwittingly persist in their mistaken *ijtihād*. Unlike other scholars of *ijtihād*, who can persist in their erroneous conclusions. However, their error is not only forgiven, but they also receive one reward for exerting their utmost effort in comprehending the rule of religion to the fullest extent, as authentic and well-known Traditions bear testimony to this fact.

The foregoing discussion also allays the following doubt: It seems, according to the above verses, that the Messenger ﷺ does not speak of his own desire, but whatever he conveys to the people is a revelation from Allah. It follows from this that he does not exercise independent reasoning in any matter whatsoever, whereas authentic Traditions show otherwise. There are incidents recorded that at the beginning, he promulgated one law, but, later on, revelation descended and the law was changed. This is an indication that the earlier law was not the law of Allah, but it was based on his *ijtihād*. The foregoing paragraph already responded to this objection: The second type of revelation establishes a general principle of law from which the Messenger ﷺ derives laws on the basis of *ijtihād*, and

promulgates them. Because the general principle has descended from Allah, all the laws are said to be the revelation from Allah. Allah knows best!

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى (It is taught to him by one [angel] of strong faculties,... 53:5) From here upto the eighteenth verse, لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى the subject-matter is the revelation from Allah. It has been established that the Qur'an is a record of verbal revelation vouchsafed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. There is no room for doubt about the fact that it is the very Words of Allah. It was sent down in such a way that no possibility of confusion or error ever existed.

Divergent Interpretation of the Verses of Najm

Regarding these verses of Sūrah Najm, two divergent interpretations of the leading commentators are reported. The summary of one interpretation is that all these verses relate to the incident of Mi'rāj (Ascension of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the heavens). As a result, words and phrases like شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى *shadīd-ul-quwā* (One of strong faculties), *dhū mirrah* (one of vigour) فَاسْتَوَى *fastawā* (he stood poised), and دَنَى فَتَدَلَّى *danā fatadallā* (then he drew near, and came down,) are all qualities and actions of Allah. (It means that Allah Ta'ālā has taught the Holy Prophet ﷺ directly without any media, and that he came close to Him. The Qur'an further speaks of Vision [*ru'yah*] and Witnessing [*mushāhadah*]. They too have been taken to mean the Vision and Witnessing of Allah. Among the noble Companions, Sayyidnā Anas and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ have adopted this interpretation. In Tafsīr Maḥzarī too this interpretation has been given preference. Many noble Companions, *tabi'īn* [Companions' pupils] and other leading commentators, however, take these verses to refer to the event when the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw the noble angel Jibra'īl ؑ in his original shape. According to them, شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى *shadīd-ul-quwā* (one of strong faculties), and other qualities and acts mentioned in these verses are the qualities of Jibra'īl ؑ. There are many factors in support of this interpretation. Historically, Sūrah An-Najm is one of the very early Sūrahs and, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, this is the first Sūrah the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited in public in the Sacred city of Makkah. Obviously, the incident of Mi'rāj took place much later. This argument, however, may be debatable. But the stronger proof in favor of the second interpretation is that in a tradition recorded in the Musnad of

Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself interprets these verses that they relate to seeing the noble Jibra'īl عليه السلام

عَنِ الشَّعْبِيِّ عَنْ مَسْرُوقٍ قَالَ كُنْتُ عِنْدَ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا فَقُلْتُ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ يَقُولُ (وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ بِالْأَفْقِ الْمُبِينِ، وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى) فَقَالَتْ أَنَا أَوَّلُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْهَا فَقَالَ إِنَّمَا ذَاكَ جِبْرِيلُ لَمْ يَرَهُ، فِي صُورَتِهِ الَّتِي خُلِقَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا مَرَّتَيْنِ رَأَاهُ مُنْهَبِطًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ سَادًّا عِظَمَ خَلْقِهِ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ، أَخْرَجَاهُ فِي الصَّحِيحِينَ مِنْ حَدِيثِ الشَّعْبِيِّ. (ابن كثير)

Masrūq reports from Sha'bī رحمه الله تعالى: Masrūq ﷺ said: "One day I was sitting with Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها and I asked her. 'Did not Allah say (وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ بِالْأَفْقِ الْمُبِينِ وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى)' And indeed he saw him in the clear horizon' and 'Indeed he saw him another time' she replied: 'I was the first among the Ummah to ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it.' He said: 'That was Jibra'īl. He only saw him twice in his actual and real figure. He saw Jibra'īl descend from heaven to earth, and he was so huge that he covered the entire horizon between the sky and the earth."

(Ibn-Kathīr)

The wordings of this narration in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim are almost the same as recorded above. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajar, in the chapter of Tafsīr of Fath-ul-Bārī, has narrated this tradition on the authority of Ibn Marduwhai in the following words:

أَنَا أَوَّلُ مَنْ سَأَلَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ هَذَا، فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ رَبَّكَ؟ فَقَالَ: لَا، إِنَّمَا رَأَيْتُ جِبْرِيلَ مُنْهَبِطًا. (فتح الباری، ص ۴۹۳ ج ۸)

Siddiqah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها says: "I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about It, and I said, 'Did you see your Lord?' He replied, 'No: I saw Jibra'īl descending.'" (Fath-ul-Bārī vol, 8/p, 493)

Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī records that Shaibani asked Sayyidnā Zirr about the meaning of the verses فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ (so as he was at a distance between two bows (joined together), rather even nearer. Thus He [Allah] revealed to His slave what He revealed - 53:9,10) He replied that 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ narrated to us that Muḥammad ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام having six hundred wings. Ibn Jarīr, with his own chain of transmitters, reports that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, interpreting the verse 11: مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ ("The heart did not err in what he saw") says that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ saw Jibra'īl عليه السلام clad

in *rafrāf* [green] garment filling the entire space between heaven and earth.

Ibn Kathīr's Findings

Ibn Kathīr has quoted all these narrations in his Tafsīr and said that in all the above-quoted verses perception and proximity refer to seeing and being close to Jibrā'īl عليه السلام. From among the noble Companions, this is the view of the Mother of the Faithful Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها and of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Dharr Ghifārī, Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه and others. This is why Ibn Kathīr says:

Vision and proximity in these verses refer to seeing and being close to Jibrā'īl عليه السلام when the Holy Prophet ﷺ had seen him for the first time in his original shape. Then he saw him for the second time on the night of Mi'rāj near *Sidrat-ul-Muntaha* (Lote-tree of the Uppermost Boundary). He saw him the first time at the very beginning of his Prophethood when Jibrā'īl عليه السلام descended with the very first installment of revelation, and delivered to him Sūrah Iqra'. After that, there was an interval which caused terrible grief and [spiritual] depression. As a result, time and again, the thought crossed his mind that he should go to the top of the mountain and fall from there and give his life away. Whenever such a situation arose, Jibrā'īl عليه السلام called out to him invisibly from the air: 'O Muḥammad! You are Allah's Messenger; you are true; and I am Jibrā'īl.' The voice would calm his heart, and recompose it. Whenever such a thought crossed his mind, Jibrā'īl عليه السلام would comfort him by his voice. But the comforting and consoling were always invisible. One day Jibrā'īl عليه السلام was in an open field at Baṭḥā' in his original shape with six hundred wings which had covered the entire horizon. Then Jibrā'īl عليه السلام came close to Allah's Messenger, and delivered the Divine revelation to him. On that occasion, the reality of the greatness of Jibrā'īl عليه السلام and his majestic value in the sight of Allah became manifest to Allah's Messenger ﷺ.

In short, Imām Ibn Kathīr himself, on the basis of the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and the views of the blessed Companions, preferred this interpretation of the above verses of Sūrah An-Najm, that

is, it refers to seeing Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) and being close to him. This was the Holy Prophet's ﷺ first experience of seeing Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) in this world on the horizon of Makkah. Some of the versions narrate that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw him in his actual and real shape for the first time, he became unconscious. Then Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) came very close to him in the shape of a human being [and he regained consciousness].

The second incident of Holy Prophet's ﷺ seeing Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) is mentioned in Verse 13 and 14 of this Sūrah in the following words: وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزَلَةً أُخْرَىٰ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ (And indeed he saw him another time [13] by *sidrat-ul-muntaha* (the lote-tree in the upper realm), [14]). This verse mentions that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) for the second time, and this happened on the Night of Ascension (Mi'rāj). On the basis of reasons stated above, the commentators generally adopt this interpretation. Ibn Kathīr's arguments have just been put forward. Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Imām Rāzī and others normally prefer this interpretation. My mentor Maulānā Ashraf Alī has also preferred this interpretation, the summary of which is that the earlier verses of Sūrah An-Najm which makes mention of *ru'yah* (seeing) does not refer to having a Vision of Allah, but of Jibra'īl (جبرائيل). Nawawī, in his commentary on Muslim, and Ḥafīz in *Faṭḥ-ul-Bārī* also have preferred this interpretation.

دُورِمَّةً فَاسْتَوَىٰ وَهُوَ بِالْأَفْقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ (one of vigour. So he stood poised, while he was on the upper horizon...53:6-7] The word *mirrah* means 'strength' or 'vigour'. This is another quality of Jibra'īl (جبرائيل), in that he is no weakling, but strong, mighty in power and firm, so that it may not be suspected that the devil may intercept the angel carrying the Divine revelation and snatch it away from him. Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) is so mighty in power and strength that the devil dare not come anywhere near him. The word *istawā* (إِسْتَوَىٰ) means to be or become straight or to level. The verse means that when he saw Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) the first time, the latter was descending from the heaven. Having descended, he sat or settled straight on the highest part of the horizon. *Ufuq* [horizon] is qualified by *a'lā* [the highest part or uppermost] and it signifies that Jibra'īl (جبرائيل) was shown on the uppermost horizon, [so that he could be seen clearly] because the lower part of the horizon which seems to be adjacent to the earth is normally hidden from the sight [as a result he would not have been visible to the Holy Prophet ﷺ].

ثُمَّ دَلَّى فَدَلَّى (Then he drew near, and came down,... 53:8). The word *danā* means to draw near and *tadalla* means to hang or to come down. The verse means that Jibra'īl عليه السلام drew near by coming down.

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى (so as he was at a distance between two bows (joined together), rather even nearer....53:9). The noun *qāb* refers to the distance between the curved handle of a bow and the tight chord that releases arrows. This distance is estimated about the length of one hand. The expression *qāba qawsain* is based on an ancient Arab custom, according to which when two persons pledged themselves to firm friendship, each one of them would turn the wooden part of their bows towards themselves, but they would turn the chord part towards the other. In this way when the chords of their bows were joined together, this used to be regarded as the proclamation of proximity, love and affection at the time of which the distance between the two persons would be two bows' length - approximately the length of two arms or one cubit. The expression *aw adnā* ('rather even nearer') signifies that the relationship of closeness was no ordinary one, it in fact was more intimate than could be conceived. The reason for the mention of such intimacy with Jibra'īl عليه السلام in the above verses is to confirm that the revelation which he delivered is indubitably and truly from Allah, and he heard it with absolute accuracy in every detail: There is no room for any doubt in this. This closeness and intimacy further allays the suspicion that the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have not recognized Jibra'īl عليه السلام and that the devil might interfere.

فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى (Thus He [Allah] revealed to His slave what He revealed... 53:10) The subject pronoun understood in the past perfect verb *awḥā* (He revealed) refers to Allah, and so does the pronoun in '*abdiḥī* (His slave), and the verse means: Allah revealed to His servant Muḥammad ﷺ whatever He revealed through the medium of Jibra'īl عليه السلام by attaching him so intimately to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

An Academic Problem and its Solution

Here an apparent problem arises which at best can be described as academic, because it does not relate to a real situation. According to an overwhelming consensus of the *Mufasssirīn* and *Muḥaddithīn*, all the pronouns in the above verses refer to Jibra'īl عليه السلام. Likewise, all the pronouns in the sentences from *فَاسْتَوَىٰ fastawā* to *أَدْنَىٰ adnā* *fa kāna qāba qawsaini aw adnā* refer to him. The forthcoming verses,

according to consensus of the commentators, also speak of Jibra'īl عليه السلام. Therefore, referring the intervening pronouns of *awhā* and *'abdihi* is contrary to the context and causes *intishār-uḍ-ḍamā'ir* (inconsistency of the pronouns).

Our honourable mentor Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shah Kashmirī رحمه الله تعالى has responded to this problem thus: There is neither any contextual confusion here, nor any pronominal ambiguity. In point of fact, early part of Sūrah An-Najm in verse [4] it was mentioned إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى (It is not but revelation revealed [to him]...4)'. Now in verse [10] أَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى (So He [Allah] revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.) the same theme is continued, reinforced and consolidated in this way: Obviously, the One who sends down revelation is Allah Ta'ālā and none else. However, there is a medium through whom the revelation is delivered to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Verse [4] may be treated as a preamble to the theme of revelation. Verses [5-9] describe the strong qualities and other characteristics of the medium of revelation Jibra'īl عليه السلام. Verse [10] is thus the complement or epilogue to the preamble. In this verse there cannot be *intishār-uḍ-ḍamā'ir* because the antecedents of the pronouns in verse 10 cannot possibly be anyone but Allah. Thus the antecedent of these pronouns was determined from the very outset. In the phrase *māawḥā* 'whatever He revealed' is obscure or vague. *Mā* [whatever] is sometimes used to denote honour, surprise, magnificence, grandeur, splendor, opulence or for emphasis. Here it is employed to indicate 'the majestic or glorious status of revelation'.

It is learnt from a Ḥadīth recorded in chapter [1] of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, that the revelation which was sent down at this time was the initial verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir [Chapter 74]. Allah knows best!

Thus marked by thematic and structural coherence, the Qur'an confirms that it is an absolutely true and veritable words of Allah. This may be compared to the Muhaddithins' study of Ḥadīth. In order to verify the authenticity of the Traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ they trace in full the chains of authorities from themselves [that is, the last of the authorities] to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In these verses Allah sets up the chain of authorities: [1] Allah is the *Muḥīṭ*, that is, He is the Ultimate Source from where the revelation originates; and [2] Jibra'īl عليه السلام is the transmitting authority between Allah and the Messenger of Allah. The

above verses describe Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) as magnificent in status and mighty in power: This confirms his honesty and integrity as the transmitting authority.

مَا كَذَّبَ الْفؤَادُ مَا رَأَى (The heart did not err in what he saw....53:11) *Fu'ād* means heart, and the verse means whatever the eyes saw, the heart did not err in its grasping. This erring in the verse is described as *kidhb* [lying]. In other words, the heart did not lie in connection with the perceived objects. It did not err or slip up. In the phrase *mā ra'ā* 'what he saw', the Qur'ān does not specify what it saw. The blessed Companions and their followers, and the leading authorities on Tafsīr hold two divergent views as was discussed in detail earlier: [1] The phrase means it [the Holy Prophet's ﷺ heart] saw Allah (and this is the view of Ibn 'Abbās); and [2] others (like Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Hurairah and Abū Dharr Ghifārī (رضي الله عنه)) express the view that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) in his original shape. The Arabic verb *ra'ā* originally means to see with physical eyes, and after having seen with physical eyes the heart grasps and comprehends. Thus the Holy Prophet ﷺ first saw Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) with his physical eyes, and then grasped and comprehended him with his heart. Therefore, there is no need to take the word *ru'yah* in the figurative or metaphorical sense of *ru'yah qalbiyah* [to see with the heart] as did Al-Qurṭubī.

One more question remains: In this verse *idrāk* [grasping, comprehending, discerning, cognizing and perceiving] has been attributed to the heart, whereas according to most famous philosophers, it is related to '*aql* [the intellect] or the soul endowed with the faculty of speech. Answer to this question is that many verses of the Qur'ān show that the real centre of *idrāk* is the heart. Therefore, sometimes the word '*qalb* (heart) is used for '*aql* (intellect), as for example the word *qalb* (plural: *qulūb*) in the following verses bear ample testimony to this fact: لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا (for him who has a heart - 50:37) and لَّهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا (they have hearts with which they do not comprehend' - (7:179). *Qalb* (heart) here refers to '*aql* (intellect) because heart is the centre of intellectual activities.

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى، عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى (And indeed he saw him another time by *sidrat-ul-muntahā* [the lote-tree in the upper realm]...53:13-14). Here too there are two views regarding the antecedent of the pronoun *hu* (him):

[1] that it refers to seeing Allah; or [2] that it refers to seeing Jibra'il (جبرائيل). The adverb نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى *nazlatan 'ukhrā* [another time or at another descent], according to overwhelming majority, this *nuzūl* refers to the second descent of Jibra'il (جبرائيل). The first vision was experienced in this world on the uppermost horizon of Makkah. The second vision was experienced on the seventh heaven near the Lote-Tree of the Uppermost Realm. Obviously, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went up to the seventh heaven on the Night of Mi'raj. Thus it is possible to determine the approximate time of the second experience, which took place on that occasion. The word *sidrah* literally denotes lote-tree and *munṭahā* means the place of *intihā'* [end]. Thus *sidrat-ul-munṭahā* is the Lote-Tree on the seventh heaven under the Throne of the Gracious Allah. According to a narration in Muslim, the Tree is on the sixth heaven. Reconciliation is possible between the two apparently conflicting versions in that its root is on the sixth heaven and its branches are spread on the seventh heaven (Qurtubī). Generally the access of angels ends at this point, and therefore, it is called *munṭahā* (the end). Some Traditions inform us that the Divine injunctions first descend from the Divine Throne to the *sidrat-ul-munṭahā* which are handed over to the relevant angels. Similarly, angels going up from the earth to the heaven with Books of Deeds etc. convey them to this point. Then there may be some other way for their presentation to Allah Almighty. This subject is reported from 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) as recorded by Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad.

عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى (near which there is *Jannat-ul-ma'wā* [the Paradize of Abode],... 53:15) The word *ma'wā* means 'abode' and a place where one resides or reposes comfortably. The *Jannah* (Paradize) is called مَأْوَى *ma'wa* because this is man's original abode. This is where 'Ādam and Ḥawwa' عليهما السلام were created; from here they were sent down to the earth; and this is where the people of Paradise will be sent back to reside permanently.

The Present Locale of Paradise and Hell

This verse verifies that Paradise exists at the present moment, as is the belief of the overwhelming majority of the Ummah. They believe that Paradise and Hell have been created and are already in existence. This verse pointed out that the location of Paradise is on the seventh heaven under the Divine Throne. In other words, the seventh heaven is, as though, the floor of Paradise and its roof is the Divine Throne. The

location of Hell is not explicitly stated anywhere in the Qur'ān or Prophetic Traditions. Some scholars of the Qur'ān deduce from the verse [6] of Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭūr وَالْبَحْرِ الْمَسْجُورِ (and by the sea, filled up with fire,) that Hell is situated beneath the sea in the deep recesses of the earth which are presently hidden under some heavy covering. On the Day of Resurrection, it will be split asunder, and the sea will be kindled, thus turning the entire ocean into a raging and blazing fire.

Many European excavators and explorers of the current age made attempts to dig into the ground in order to build roads so as to travel around from place to place for many long years. For this task, they invented the largest and most sophisticated machinery. Various groups of scientists and experts exerted efforts in this direction. The most successful group was the one who by means of various types of machinery was able to dig six miles deep into the recesses of the earth, but beyond that they came across immovable rocks which frustrated them. They attempted to excavate in another place and dug for six miles and again came across unshakeable rocks beyond which they could not dig. In this way they experimented in many places and came to the conclusion that beyond the depth of six miles into the recesses of the earth there is a rocky covering on the entire earth at that level where no machinery can penetrate. The earth covers thousands of miles in diameter but despite advances and strides made in sciences they could have access only to the depth of six miles. Beyond that point they acknowledged the existence of impenetrable rocky covering and abandoned their attempts. This scientific experiment to excavate and explore supports the notion that the entire earth is covered with adamantine rocks, and access beyond them is not possible. If any authentic narration proves the location of Hell in this rocky covering, it should not come as a surprise. Allah knows best!

إِذْ يُغَشَّى الْيَدْرَةَ مَا يُغَشَّى (when the lote-tree was covered by that which covered it...53:16) Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim records a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ who said: "Golden butterflies were at that time falling on *sidrat-ul-muntahā* from all sides, and it seemed as if it was specially decorated for that occasion in honour of the most revered guest, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ."

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى (The eye neither went wrong, nor did exceed the limit...53:17) The verb *zāgha* is derived from the infinitive *zaigh* which

denotes to become crooked or go astray. *Ṭaghā* is derived from *ṭughyān* which means to transgress or exceed the limit. The two expressions purport to say that in whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw, his eyes did not err or slip up. This verse allays the suspicion that sometimes human sight errs or slips up, especially when some wonderful or unusually marvelous thing is seen. In response to this suspicion the Qur'ān uses two expressions because there are two ways in which human sight can go awry: [1] not looking at the object directly that one was supposed to see, and turning the eye to some other side. *Mā zāgha* (neither went wrong) negates this situation. The Holy Prophet's ﷺ sight did not swerve or turn right or left, and thus did not miss the intended object. He saw exactly what was meant for him to see. [2] looking at the desired object, but at the same time looking at other objects also. In this situation too there is sometimes the fear of losing sight of the main object and causing confusion. *Mā ṭaghā* (nor did it exceed the limit) in the verse is used to remove this doubt that the Holy Prophet ﷺ might have looked at other things in addition to what he was ordained to see.

Scholars who interpret the preceding verses as referring to the vision of Jibra'īl عليه السلام explain this verse to mean that the eye of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not err in seeing him. This had to be clarified because Jibra'īl عليه السلام is the transmitting medium. If the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not see him clearly and recognize him, the revelation would not be beyond doubt.

Scholars who interpreted the preceding verses as speaking of Allah's Vision interpret this verse too in the same vein that the eyes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not err or slip up in the Vision of Allah. This verse further clarifies that the Vision was with the physical eyes, not only with the eyes of the heart.

Another Approach to Interpreting the Preceding Verses: A Useful Analysis

Our venerable mentor Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shah Kashmirī رحمه الله تعالى was a typical example of the Traditionalists who preceded him. He no doubt was a symbol of Allah and His proof on earth. His grasp of knowledge and Islamic sciences was without a doubt an exact replica of the leading authorities on the sciences of Prophetic Tradition like Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar and Dhahabī. His *Mushkilāt-ul-Qur'ān* is an invaluable treasure trove of the profoundest study of Islamic knowledge

and sciences. The noble Companions and their followers, and subsequently the scholars of Tafsīr and Ḥadīth have interpreted the verses of Sūrah An-Najm differently which gave rise to some scholarly questions. *Mushkilāt-ul-Qur'ān* interprets the verses in such a way that most of the different views have been reconciled.

Then when my another mentor Shaikh-ul-Islam Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī رحمه الله تعالى wrote his *Fath-ul-Mulhim*, the commentary of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, he came across the description of the Holy Prophet's nocturnal journey of *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj* with reference to the verses of Sūrah An-Najm. In view of the complexity of the problem, he requested the venerable Allāmah Anwar Shah رحمه الله تعالى to write the interpretation and made it a part of his *Fath-ul-Mulhim*, and adopted it in his *fawā'id-ul-Qur'ān*. In this way this research is the unanimous outcome of the two of my most distinguished teachers and mentors. Before reading on, it is necessary to keep in mind a few principal points which are recognized by almost all the scholars and leading authorities: [1] the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibrā'il عليه السلام twice in his original shape. The vision on both the occasions is mentioned in this chapter. We were able to determine that the second vision took place on the seventh heaven near *sidrat-ul-muntahā*. Obviously, this happened on the Night of *Mi'rāj*. In this way, we know the time and locale of the vision. The locale and time of the first vision cannot be determined by these verses, but they can be determined by the following narration of Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, chapter entitled: 'How the revelation started':

قال وهو يحدث عن فترة الوحي فقال في حديثه بينا انا امشي اذ سمعت صوتا من السماء فرفعت بصري فاذا الملك الذي جاءني بحراء جالس على كرسي بين السماء والارض فرعبت منه فرجعت فقلت زملوني فانزل الله تعالى يَأْيُهَا الْمُدِيرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ (الى قوله) وَالرُّجُزَ فَاهْجُرْ فحمي الوحي وتتابع.

Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه said, speaking of the temporary break in revelation, [the Holy Prophet] said in his narrative: "Whilst I was walking along, I heard a voice from heaven and I raised up my eyes, and lo! The Angel that had appeared to me in [the cave of] *Hira'* was sitting on a chair [suspended] between heaven and earth, and I was struck with awe on account of him and I returned and said, 'Wrap me up, Wrap me up,' then Allah sent down [74: 1-5] يَأْيُهَا الْمُدِيرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ، وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرْ. وَرَبَّابِكَ فَطَهِّرْ وَالرُّجُزَ فَاهْجُرْ 'O you, enveloped in a mantle, stand up and warn, and pronounce

the greatness of your Lord, and purify your clothes, and keep away from filth, "Then revelation became copious and came in succession."

This narration indicates that the first occasion on which the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Jibra'il عليه السلام in his original shape was in the course of temporary break in revelation in Makkah when he was walking along in the city of Makkah. This confirms that the first incident took place before Mi'rāj on this earth in Makkah, and the second incident took place on the seventh heaven on the Night of Mi'rāj.

Another point on which all concur is that the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm, at least from verse [13] to verse [18], all relate to the incident of Mi'rāj.

In view of the foregoing points, the venerable mentor, Maulana Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri رحمه الله تعالى has interpreted the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm in the following way:

The Qur'ān, according to its normal style, has mentioned two incidents in the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm. One incident relates to seeing Jibra'il عليه السلام in his original shape in Makkah when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was going somewhere when there was a temporary break in revelation. This incident took place before the incident of Isra' and Mi'rāj. The second incident relates to the night of Mi'rāj. Here it is mentioned that he saw Jibra'il عليه السلام in his original shape together with some of the other greatest, wonderful, marvelous and glorious signs of Allah, and the possibility cannot be ruled out that these signs included the Vision of Allah Ta'ala Himself.

The main theme of the initial verses of Sūrah An-Najm is to confirm the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and to remove doubts about the authenticity of his revelation. Thus swearing an oath by the stars, Allah says that there are neither any voluntary nor involuntary errors in his instructions to the Ummah, nor does he say anything out of his own selfish desires. He only transmits to the people what he was commanded to convey, in its totality without additions or omissions. Jibra'il عليه السلام was the transmitting agent, therefore his special characteristics and high position have been described in several verses. Another reason for giving a greater account of this Angel is probably

because the pagans of Makkah were not aware of this Angel, though they were aware of the Angels Isrāfīl and Mīkā'il. At any event, having described the imposing and majestic qualities of Jibra'il عليه السلام in full, attention is drawn to the main theme of revelation. 'فَاَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ' 'So He [Allah] revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.' (verse 10). Up to this point there are ten verses, in the course of verifying the authenticity of revelation and messenger-ship, Jibra'il's عليه السلام qualities have been portrayed. If we analyze Jibra'il's عليه السلام qualities, it will be seen that they apply to the Angel directly and candidly. If we say that the qualities apply to Allah - as did some of the commentators - they can hardly apply to Him without a labored interpretation. For example, phrases like 'شَدِيدُ الْقُرَىٰ' 'one of strong faculties', 'ذُو مِرَّةٍ' 'one of vigour', 'ثُمَّ دَنَىٰ' 'Then he drew near, and came down, فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ' so as he was at a distance between two bows, rather even nearer.' can, though, be applied to Allah, but not without labored interpretation. However, they do apply appropriately to Jibra'il عليه السلام without any far-fetched interpretation. Therefore, with regard to the initial verses - in which there is reference to 'vision', 'closeness' and 'proximity' - it seems more appropriate to refer them to the 'vision' of Jibra'il عليه السلام.

However, from verse [11] 'مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ' 'The heart did not err in what he saw' to verse [18] 'لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ' 'He has indeed seen a part of the biggest signs of your Lord.' describes the incidents of Isrā' and Mi'rāj. Though in this passage too the vision of Jibra'il عليه السلام is mentioned, yet it is a part of 'many great signs' The possibility cannot be ruled out that the phrase 'greatest Signs' includes the 'ru'yat' (vision) of Allah' which is supported by authentic Traditions and the views of noble Companions and their followers, which cannot be overlooked or ignored. Verse [11] 'مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ' "The heart did not err in what he saw", means that what the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw with his eyes his blessed heart confirmed that he saw correctly, with no mistakes. 'Mākadhaba' describes this situation and the particle 'Ma' [whatever] is general, referring to the vision of Jibra'il عليه السلام and whatever else he saw on the Night of Mi'rāj and above all the Vision of Allah Himself. This is supported by verse [12] 'أَتَمْسَا' 'رُؤُوسُهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ' 'Do you quarrel with him in what he sees?' This verse addresses pagans of Makkah that they should not dispute or be sceptical about what he saw [in the past] or will see in the future. Everything he

saw was the veritable truth and whatever he will see in the future will be a veritable reality. This verse did not say *قَدْ رَأَى* [...*qad ra'ā*] '...he saw' [using the past perfect tense] but rather *عَلَى مَا يَرَى* [*alā mā yara*] which may be translated as '...will see' [using the future tense] which indicates that he will see him on the Night of Mi'rāj. Thus verse [13] *وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى* 'And indeed he saw him another time' is explicit on the point. This verse too has two possible interpretations: [1] he saw Jibra'il عليه السلام; and [2] he saw Allah. That he saw Jibra'il عليه السلام is perfectly obvious to any scholar. But there may be a hint to the fact that he saw Allah also, because seeing requires proximity and closeness to Allah, and the verse 14 *عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى* 'by *sidrat-ul-muntahā* (the lote-tree in the upper realm) indicates this closeness, meaning when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was near *sidrat-ul-muntahā* and had reached a high stage of nearness to Allah, he saw Him. The Tradition cited below supports the notion of the Vision of Allah:

وَأَتَيْتُ سِدْرَةَ الْمُنْتَهَى فَعَشَيْتُنِي ضَبَابَةً خَرَرْتُ لَهَا سَاجِدًا وَهَذِهِ الضَّبَابَةُ هِيَ الظُّلُّ
مِنَ الْعَمَامِ الَّتِي يَأْتِي فِيهَا اللَّهُ وَيَتَجَلَّى.

'When I reached *sidrat-ul-muntahā*, I was overshadowed by something like the cloud and I fell prostrate for it. On the Day of Resurrection, there will be something like clouds overshadowing in which His Majestic Descent will manifest.'

Likewise, verse [53:17] *مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى* (The eye neither went wrong, nor did exceed the limit.) includes both possibilities - vision of Jibra'il عليه السلام and Vision of Allah - and it further proves that the this vision took place in the state of wakefulness with his physical eyes [that is, it was not a dream experience].

In sum, verses that relate to the Night of Mi'rāj and contain words pertaining to 'seeing' carry the equal possibility of seeing Jibra'il عليه السلام and seeing Allah Ta'alā Himself. Other scholars too have interpreted them as the Vision of Allah. The Qur'ānic words have possibility to be interpreted in that way.

The Question of the Beatific Vision of the Creator

All Companions, their immediate followers and overwhelming majority of the Ummah concur that the inmates of Paradise and the believers in general will see Allah. Authentic Traditions bear ample testimony to this

fact and verity. They indicate that the Vision and Witnessing of Allah is not impossible. However, human sight cannot bear to see Him in this mundane world, because the capacity of the eyes is not powerful enough. Thus nobody can see Allah in this world. Regarding the Hereafter, the Qur'an says

فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

"You were heedless of this. Now We have removed your veil from you; so your sight today is sharp." [50:22]

Venerable Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى says that it is not possible for any human being to see Allah in this world, because his sight is perishable, and Allah is Eternal. In the Hereafter, man will be given non-perishable sight, as a result nothing will prevent it from the seeing Allah. Venerable Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ says something similarly. A narration recorded in Muslim in the following words makes the point explicit:

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَرَوْا رَبَّكُمْ حَتَّى تَمُوتُوا

"And know that you shall never see your Lord, until you die"
(Fath-ul-Bārī: vol 8/p. 493)

This indicates the possibility that if the Holy Prophet ﷺ is equipped with extraordinarily powerful faculty of sight, he should be able to see Allah in this world too on a special occasion. But on the Night of Ascension he was called in the most distinguishable manner from this world to see and witness the heavens, Paradise and Hell, and other great Signs of Allah and manifestation of His power. On this occasion, the Vision of Allah is an exception to the general rule, because he is out of the mundane world. The possibility of the Vision of Allah has thus been confirmed and verified.

So far we have proved that the possibility does exist, but the question is whether it really occurred. In this matter, the Traditions vary, and the Qur'anic verses are interpretable in two possible ways. Therefore, this question was always debatable among the Companions, their followers and leading authorities on religion. Ibn-Kathīr says that under the interpretation of these verses Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ verifies that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Allah and a group of righteous predecessors have followed him. Other groups of Companions and their followers have

differed from this viewpoint. He further adduced the evidences of both the groups.

Likewise, Ḥāfiẓ رحمه الله تعالى in Fath-ul-Bārī [vol 8/p.494] under the Tafsīr of Sūrah An-Najm has cited the differences of the Companions and their followers and then quoted some such statements which reconcile the divergent views. He further says that Qurṭubī in his work *mufhim* prefers to observe silence in the matter and not to decide either way, because this question does not concern our practical life so that we have to choose a particular direction. The question concerns our belief system, in which case incontestable evidence is required. In any matter which cannot be proved incontestably, the rule is to observe silence. This author believes that this is the most sound and circumspect approach to the issue. Therefore, the arguments of the two groups have not been cited. Allah, the Pure and the Exalted, knows best!

Verses 19 - 28

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّتَّ وَالْعُزَّىٰ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَنُوءَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾ أَلَكُمُ
الذَّكْرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾ تِلْكَ إِذَا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَىٰ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا
أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ؕ إِنْ
يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ ؕ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ
الْهُدَىٰ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَمْ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا تَمْنَىٰ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَىٰ
﴿٢٥﴾ وَكَمْ مِنْ مَلَكٍ فِي السَّمُوتِ لَا تُغْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مِنْ
بَعْدِ أَنْ يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَىٰ ﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسْمُؤْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ
عِلْمٍ ؕ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ ؕ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Have you ever considered about the (idols of) *Lāt* and *‘Uzzā*, [19] and about the other, the third, the *Manāt*? [20] Is it that you have males and He (Allah) has females? [21] If so, it is a totally unjust division. [22] These are nothing but names you and your fathers have

invented; Allah has sent down no authority attached to them. They are following nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire, while guidance from their Lord has surely reached them. [23] Is it that man gets whatever he wishes? [24] (No,) because to Allah alone belongs the (good of) the Hereafter and the former life (of this world). [25] And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession cannot benefit (any one) at all, but after Allah allows (it) for whomsoever He wills and pleases. [26] Those who do not believe in the Hereafter name the angels after the names of the females. [27] And they do not have knowledge about it. They follow nothing but conjecture, and conjecture is of no use in (the matter of) Truth. [28]

Refuting Idolatry

The preceding verses declared the Glory of Allah, His Majesty and Dignity. They further confirmed and verified in the fullest details the Prophet-hood and messenger-ship of Muḥammad ﷺ, and the preservation of his revelation. The present two verses imply a subtle rebuke to the Makkan pagans. The purport of the verses is to say to them that without any proof, instead of adoring such a Mighty and Powerful Creator and Lord, they stoop so low as to worship gods made of wood and stone. They allege that the angels are the daughters of God. According to other narratives, they also alleged that these idols are the daughters of God.

Pagans of Arabia had countless idols that they worshipped. However, there were three of them that were most popular, and they were worshipped by strong and powerful tribes of Arabia. The three idols were Lāt, ‘Uzzā and Manāt. Lāt was the idol of the tribe of Thaḳīf or of the residents of Ṭā’if, ‘Uzzā was the idol of Quraish, and Manāt was the idol of Banū Hilāl. They built houses for their idols to resemble the Ka’bah. After the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ demolished them. (Qurtubī)

قِسْمَةً ضَيْرَى (If so, it is a totally unjust division.... 53:22)" *Dīzā* means to act or behave unjustly or to defraud one of one's right or due. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ interprets the phrase as unjust or unfair division.

Various Types of Zann

إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۖ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا (and conjecture is of no use in [the

matter of] Truth.... 53:28) The Arabic word *Ẓann* is used in several different senses, and one of them is baseless thoughts. This is the sense in which it is employed in the verse, because baseless thoughts were the cause of idolatry. And the verse purports to remove the cause. *Ẓann* is also used as the antonym of *yaqīn*. *Yaqīn* refers to assured or definitive knowledge about something that really exists, not the figment of someone's imagination. In this case, there is no room for any doubt or suspicion, as for instance knowledge gained from the Qur'ān and Prophetic Traditions uninterruptedly reported by an indefinite number of people or by such a large number that it is impossible that they should agree upon falsehood. As opposed to this certain knowledge, *ẓann* is sometime used for the knowledge that is based on a proof, and not on baseless thoughts, but the proof is not so certain as may rule out other possibilities, as for example, injunctions based on general narratives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The first type of injunctions is referred to as *qaṭ'iyyāt* or *yaqīniyyāt* and the second type is referred to as *ẓanniyyāt*. This type of *Ẓann* is recognized by Sharī'ah. There is ample evidence in Qur'ān and Sunnah of its recognition. The entire Ummah concurs that it is obligatory to act upon it. The above verse when denouncing *ẓann*, refers to the first type of *ẓann* which connotes baseless thoughts. Thus there is no contradiction.

Verses 29 - 32

فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى ۖ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٢٩﴾
 ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ
 وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَلَى ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
 ۚ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا
 بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٣١﴾ الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ۚ
 إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۚ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ
 أَنْتُمْ أَجْنَةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ
 اتَّقَى ﴿٣٢﴾

So, turn away from him who turns away from Our advice, and seeks nothing but (pleasure of) the worldly life. [29] That is the limit of their excess in knowledge. Indeed only your Lord knows well about the one who has gone astray from his way, and He knows well about the one who has adopted the right path. [30] And to Allah belongs whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth, so that He gives punishment to evil-doers for what they did and rewards those who did good for their good deed, [31] those who abstain from the major sins and from shameful acts, except minor involvements. Indeed your Lord is One of extensive forgiveness. He knows you more than anyone else (from a time) when He created you from the earth and when you were embryos in the wombs of your mothers. So, do not claim purity (from faults) for yourselves. He knows best who is God-fearing. [32]

Necessity of turning away from the Misguided People

فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى لَا عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا. ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ (So, turn away from him who turns away from Our advice, and seeks nothing but (pleasure of) the worldly life.... 53:29-30)

A Special Warning

The Qur'ān here describes the condition of those unbelievers who denied the Hereafter and the Day of Judgement. Regretfully, nowadays the Muslims have characterized themselves by the same condition as a result of Western education and material needs and desires. All our attempts to make progress in the fields of various branches of knowledge, sciences and arts pivot on, or revolve around, economics. They do not think even by mistake about *ma'ādiyyāt* (matters relating to the Life Hereinafter). We believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and hope for his intercession. But Allah commands the Holy Prophet ﷺ to withdraw from the people of misguidance and shun them. We seek refuge in Allah from such misguidance!

Allah Forgives the Small Faults, *Al-Lamam*

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْأَثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ (those who abstain from the major sins and from shameful acts, except minor involvements....53:32) The preceding verse praises those who follow the right guidance of Allah and do good deeds. In the present verse, it is stated that the good-doers are those who avoid major sins and, especially immoral sins and shameful

deeds. There is one exception made by the expression *lamam* [which will be elaborated upon later]. It means that they sometimes do commit minor sins [*lamam*] but that does not exclude them from the category of being *muḥsinīn* [good-doers].

The Companions and their followers interpret the word لَمَمَ *lamam* in two different ways:

[1] Some commentators are of the view that it refers to small faults and minor errors which in Sūrah An-Nisā' has been described as *sayyi'at*:
 (فَإِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسِيرونَ) "If you abstain from the major (sins) out of what you have been forbidden from We shall write off your minor sins - 4:31". Ibn-Kathīr has reported this from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurairah ؓ;

[2] Some other scholars have held that *lamam* means, a sin that a person commits incidentally and then repents. After repentance, he never repeats it. Ibn Kathīr has reported a narration from Ibn Jarīr, first through Sayyidnā Mujāhid, and again through Sayyidnā 'Aṭā', from Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, and through Hasan Basri from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ. The gist of that narration too is that even if a person were to commit a major sin incidentally and repents, he will not be excluded from the ranks of the God-fearing people. Verse [135] of Sūrah 'Al-Imrān:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاجِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرَ
 اللَّهُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ.

And those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? - and do not persist in what they have done, knowingly. [3:135]

It should be noted that overwhelming majority of scholars concur that if a person persists in a minor sin and continues to do it in a determined way so that it becomes a habit, it will no longer be a minor sin, but will turn into a major sin. Therefore, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī has explained the word *lamam* as those small sins in which the doer does not persist.

Definition of Major and Minor Sins

This subject is taken up in full detail in Sūrah An-Nisā' in this book Vol. 2/pp404-410, under verse [31] (فَإِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ) "If you abstain

from major [sins] out of what you have been forbidden from, We shall write off your minor sins..." , [q.v.].

هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّكُمْ أَجْنَّةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ (He knows you more than anyone else [from a time] when He created you from the earth and when you were embryos in the wombs of your mothers...53:32) The word *ajinnatun* is the plural of *janīn* which means embryo or foetus. This verse purports to say that man does not have knowledge of himself as much as Allah knows him. When he went through the various phases of his creation in his mother's womb, he did not have any knowledge or sense. But his Creator knows fully well how wisely He was creating him. Thus he is made aware of his inability and lack of sufficient knowledge. Having said this, he is further made aware of the fact that any good he does is not his personal accomplishment. The ultimate source of his achievement is Allah: It is Allah who has given him limbs, organs and other parts of the body to perform the righteous deeds; it is He who has equipped him with the ability to move his limbs; then He has created the urge, will and determination to perform righteous actions. Hence, not even the greatest righteous, pious and God-fearing person has the right to pride upon his works and behave arrogantly. Besides, no one yet knows what the end result of his activities will be. Yet the end result is the most important factor in our life. Therefore, pride and arrogance is meaningless.

The concluding part of the verse puts it thus:

فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ

So, do not claim purity [from faults] for your selves. He knows best who is God-fearing... (53:32).

In other words, the merit of a person lies not only in his outer actions, but in *taqwā* in one's heart and in his inner moral excellence and uprightness which endures till his death. Only Allah knows who is perfect in this quality.

Sayyidah Zainab bint Abī Salamah رضى الله عنها was named by her parents as *Barrah* which means 'righteous or upright'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the concluding part of this verse فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ (Do not claim purity for your selves.) and suggested the name be changed. Therefore, they changed her name to 'Zainab'. Imām Aḥmad records on the authority of 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakrah رضى الله عنه that a person praised

another person in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He stopped him and said "If you have to praise a person, then say, 'according to my knowledge the person appears to be upright and God-fearing **لِلَّهِ** وَلَا أَزْكَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ and I cannot say that he is so in the sight of Allah as well'.

Verses 33 - 62

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى ﴿٣٣﴾ وَأَعْطَىٰ قَلِيلًا وَأَكْذَىٰ ﴿٣٤﴾ أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ
الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرَىٰ ﴿٣٥﴾ أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَىٰ ﴿٣٦﴾
وَأِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾ أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ
لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَأَنْ سَعْيُهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾ ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ
الْجَزَاءَ الْآوْفَىٰ ﴿٤١﴾ وَأَنْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ
أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَمَاتَ وَأَحْيَا ﴿٤٤﴾ وَأَنَّهُ خَلَقَ
الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٤٥﴾ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ إِذَا تُمْنَىٰ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَأَنْ عَلَيْهِ
النَّشْأَةُ الْآخِرَىٰ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَعْنَىٰ وَأَقْنَىٰ وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشَّعْرَىٰ ﴿٤٨﴾
وَأَنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَنَمُودًا فَمَا أَبْقَىٰ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَقَوْمَ
نُوحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ وَأَطْغَىٰ ﴿٥١﴾ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ
أَهْوَىٰ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَغَشَّاهَا مَا غَشَّىٰ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَىٰ ﴿٥٤﴾
هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّذْرِ الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٥٥﴾ أَزِفَتِ الْأَرْفَةُ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
وَتَضَحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَأَنْتُمْ سَمِدُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ
وَاعْبُدُوا ﴿٦١﴾ سَجْدَةً

Did you see the one who turned away, [33] and gave a little, and stopped? [34] Does he have knowledge of the Unseen whereby he sees (what he believes)? [35] Has he not been told of what was (revealed) in the scriptures of Mūsā [36] and of Ibrāhīm who fulfilled (his covenant)?

[37] (It was) that no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of the other, [38] and that a man does not deserve but (the reward of) his own effort, [39] and that his effort will soon be seen, [40] then he will be recompensed for it in full, [41] and that to your Lord is the end (of every one), [42] and that He is the One who makes (one) laugh and makes (him) weep, [43] and that He is the One who gives death and gives life, [44] and that He creates the pairs, male and female, [45] from a sperm-drop when it is poured (into a womb), [46] and that the second creation is undertaken by Him, [47] and that He is the One who gives wealth and preserves (it), [48] and that He is the One who is the Lord of Sirius (the star worshipped by pagans), [49] and that He has destroyed the earlier 'Ad, [49] and Thamūd, so spared none, [51] and (destroyed) the people of Nūḥ even before. Surely they were more unjust and more rebellious. [52] And He destroyed the overturned towns (of the people of Lūṭ) also, [53] so covered they were by that which covered. [54] Then, concerning which of your Lord's bounties would you remain in doubt? [55] This (Holy Prophet) is a warner from the (genus of the) previous warners. [56] The Imminent (Hour) has approached. [57] There is no one, beside Allah, to remove it. [58] Do you then wonder at this discourse, [59] and laugh (at it), and not weep, [60] while you are engaged in vain play? [61] Now, fall down in prostration and worship (Allah). [62]

Background of Revelation

Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr reports from Ibn Jarir that a person embraced Islam and one of his friends rebuked him for having abandoned his forefather's religion. He responded that he fears Allah's chastisement. The friend told him to make a certain payment to him, and he will take upon himself his punishment of the Hereafter. Thus he [the new Muslim] will be spared from the chastisement, and consequently he made the payment to him. The friend demanded more payment. After a scuffle, he made the additional payment to him, and for the balance a document was drawn up with signatures of witnesses. That person, according to Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, was Walīd Ibn Mughīrah who was inclined towards Islam. But his friend reproached him and took the responsibility of punishment upon his own shoulders.

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى (Did you see the one who turned away,... 53:33) The

word *tawalla* literally means 'to turn the face away', and it connotes in this context a person who turns away from Allah's obedience.

وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى (and gave a little, and stopped? ...53:34) The word *akda* is derived from *kudyah* which refers to a hard or stony piece of ground or clod that appears in the course of digging a well or a trench. As a result, the digger cannot dig any further. Thus the meaning of the verse is that at first he gave a little, then he stopped giving. In view of the incident narrated under the heading of "Background of Revelation", the meaning is quite clear. [For the person in that incident paid a little amount and then stopped payment.] Apart from this meaning, Sayyidnā Mujāhid, Sa'īd Ibn Jubair, 'Ikrimah, Qatādah and others interpret this word to imply that a person spent a little in Allah's way, then stopped it; or at first he was somewhat inclined towards Allah's obedience, and he obeyed Him for a while, and then gave it up [vide Ibn Kathīr].

أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهَوْا يَرَى (Does he have knowledge of the Unseen whereby he sees [what he believes]?...53:35) According to the story recounted in connection with the occasion of revelation, the verse means: The person who embraced Islam and later abandoned it because his friend assured him that he would bear the punishment in the Hereafter on his behalf, and spare him the pain. The fool believed him and took for granted the assurance given to him. Does he have the knowledge of the Unseen, so that he is able to see that the chastisement he deserves for disbelief will be taken over for sure by his friend? This is wholly a make-believe situation. He neither has the knowledge of the Unseen, nor can he take on the punishment of somebody else and save him. Apart from the story recounted in connection with the occasion of revelation, the verse would mean: Does this person, who stopped giving for fear of poverty and ended his acts of charity have knowledge of the Unseen and thus knows that if he does not stop spending, his wealth will go away? No. This is absolutely false. Such a person has neither the knowledge of the Unseen so that he is able to see that if he goes on spending, his wealth will be depleted and not replenished. He stopped spending in charity for righteous causes, and did not keep relations with kith and kin because of his miserliness, being stingy and out of fear of poverty. The Qur'ān makes plain in [34:39]

مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

And whatever thing you spend, He replaces it. And He is the best of the sustainers. [34:39]

If man thinks carefully, this verse does not only concern wealth and money, but it also concerns every power, strength and energy of our body. When we expend it and it gets depleted, Allah replaces it and has arranged for its replenishment. Imagine even if our limbs, organs and other body parts were made of steel and worked constantly for 60-70 years, they would have diminished long ago. However, as they diminish, Allah replenishes them inwardly as though by means of an automatic machine. Likewise, man keeps spending and it is constantly replenished.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

أَنْفِقْ يَا بِلَالُ وَلَا تَخْشَ مِنْ ذِي الْعَرْشِ إِقْلَالًا

"O Bilāl, spend and do not fear that the Lord of the Throne will render you indigent." (Ibn Kathīr)

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى. وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى (Has he not been told of what was [revealed] in the scriptures of Mūsā and of Ibrāhīm who fulfilled [his covenant])?... 53:37- 38) In verse [37], the Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been described by the expression *waffā* which is derived from the root word *wafā* and it means to fulfill faithfully the covenant one has made with someone.

Special Characteristic of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: fulfillment of Covenant

Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had a covenant with Allah that he will obey Him and convey His Message to all the people. He fulfilled faithfully the covenant: He obeyed Allah and delivered His Message to His creatures. As a result, he was made to pass through severe trials and tribulations. This is the interpretation placed upon the expression *waffā* (fulfilled) by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others.

Several narratives describe particular works of Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as a purport of the expression *waffā*, but the two versions are not contradictory, because fulfillment of covenant is general. It comprehends acting upon all the Divine injunctions, obeying Allah in all actions, fulfilling the duties of Prophet-hood and messenger-ship and reforming the creation of Allah.

Let us consider the narrative which Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verse 37, and asked: Do you know what is the meaning of

waffā (fulfilled)? Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah رضي الله عنه replied: Allah and His Rasūl know best. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

وَفِي عَمَلِ يَوْمِهِ بِرَبْعِ رَكَعَاتٍ فِي أَوَّلِ النَّهَارِ. (ابن كثير)

"He fulfilled the day's work by starting it with the performance of four *rak'at* [that is, *ṣalāt-ul-ishraq*]."

This is supported by the Tradition recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه, according to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِبْنُ آدَمَ ارْكَعْ لِي أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ مِّنْ أَوَّلِ النَّهَارِ أَكْفِكَ آخِرَهُ. (ابن كثير)

"O Son of 'Ādam! Perform four *rak'at* of prayer in the early part of the day, I shall take of you in all your affairs till the end of the day."

Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports another Tradition from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Anas رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Do you know why Allah gave Ibrāhīm عليه السلام the title of *al-ladhi waffā* (the one who fulfilled)? Then, he said, 'Because he used to recite the following *dhikr* every morning and evening:

فَسُبِّحَنَ اللَّهُ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ. (ابن كثير)

Scriptures of Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام: Special Guidance and Teachings

Whenever any command, statement, action or teaching of Allah is quoted in the Qur'ān from the scriptures of the former Prophets عليهم السلام, it means that it is obligatory for this 'Ummah to act upon it, unless there is an explicit text abrogating the previous teachings. Forthcoming eighteen verses elaborate on the special teachings of the scriptures of Holy Prophets Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام. Of them only two of the previous teachings are concerned with practical life. The rest are meant to advise, warn and draw attention to the Signs of Allah. The two verses [38] and [39] concerned with prescriptive teachings are as follows:

None shall carry the Burden of Any Other on the Day of Resurrection

﴿٣٨﴾ لَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَأَنْ لِّئِيسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾

(It was) that no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of the

other, [38] and that a man shall not deserve but (the reward of) his own effort, [39]

The word *wizr* originally means a burden, and the verse purports to say that every man shall have to carry his own wrongdoings, whether disbelief or sin, and none else shall carry his burden of sin, as Allah states in [35:18].

وَأِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ جِمْلِهَآ لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ

And if a person carrying a heavy load calls (someone) to (share) his load, nothing from it shall be carried (by the latter), even though he be a near of kin. [18]

By load or burden is meant the load or burden of sin and its punishment, signifying that on the Day of Resurrection the punishment of one will not be given to another, nor will anyone have the choice to pay for another's sin as the verse quoted above clearly indicates.

This verse also refutes the thinking of the person which was narrated above as Background of Revelation: He had become a Muslim or was going to become one, and his friend rebuked him, saying that if any punishment is meted out to him, he guarantees him that no harm will come to him. The friend assured him that he would bear the burden of his punishment, and save him. This verse further clarifies that in matters, such as these, there is no possibility that one person may commit the sin and another is held accountable to pay the price.

As for the Ḥadīth of Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain, that the dead are punished because of the weeping and wailing of their families on his death, it relates to the person who himself used to weep and wail for the deceased and was wont to it, or who had advised his heirs to weep and wail for him after his death. (Mazharī). In this case he is punished for his own deed, not on account of other people's deed.¹

The second injunction is contained in verse [39] وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

- (1). It should be noted here that if one weeps on the death of a person in a way that he or she cannot control his or her emotions, it is not a sin in Shari'ah. The wailing that has been prohibited is a particular type of wailing that was customary in Pre-Islam Arab society, and is still in vogue in some areas, in which one would cry loudly, often in an artificial manner, and would invite others to weep, slapping his face, tearing his clothes and complaining of the destiny. It is this type of formal wailing that is meant here by the esteemed author. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

(and that a man does not deserve but [the reward of] his own effort,....53:39) The summary of this verse is that just as no person shall carry the burden of sin of any other, so shall he benefit only from the good that he himself has done. It is not the case that a person performs a righteous act instead of someone else, and the latter is absolved of his responsibility. For example, if a person performs the obligatory prayers and fasts on behalf of somebody else, the latter will not be absolved of his religious duties and obligations. He is still liable for them. Likewise, if a person embraces faith on behalf of somebody else, the latter cannot be regarded as a believer.

Thus interpreted, no juristic problems arise in connection with this verse. However, some superficial questions do arise regarding Hajj and *Zakāh*. In times of necessity Shari'ah permits to perform Hajj on behalf of somebody else, or pay Zakāh on his behalf with his permission. How is this possible? A careful analysis of the two situations does not pose any problem: In the case of *Hajj-e-Badal*, the sender of a person to perform this type of pilgrimage bears the expenses himself,² and thus it is his [the sender's] own act for which he will be rewarded. In the case of *Zakāh*, appointing someone to pay is also the act of the person who made the appointment, and not that of the appointee. Therefore, the two cases are not in conflict with verse [39].

Offering Reward of Good Deeds to others

In the foregoing section we have explained that verse [39] means that no person can perform an obligatory act, such as faith, prayers and fasts, on behalf of some other person to free him of his religious duties. He will be able to benefit only from the good he himself has done. This, however, does not imply that a person cannot perform supererogatory acts and proffer their reward to someone else. There is ample textual evidence of Shari'ah that a person can supplicate or give charity or do any other good deed and proffer its reward to others. Further, there is an overwhelming consensus of the Ummah on this issue. (Ibn Kathīr)

However, only Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى differs on this issue. He says that the reward of recitation of the Qur'an cannot be proffered to anyone

(2). It should be kept in mind that this is allowed only when one is unable to perform Hajj due to a physical constraint, and therefore his obligation becomes limited to sending someone else with his own expense. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

else. He takes the above verse in a general sense and argues that the rewards of the purely bodily acts of worship, such as the prayer, fasting and recitation of the Qur'ān and so on, cannot be passed on to any other person. According to Imām Abū Hanifah رحمه الله تعالى and majority of the leading jurists, it is permissible. They argue that just as it is possible to pray for and proffer the reward of charity to another person, so likewise it is possible to recite the Qur'ān and perform other voluntary prayers to pass the reward to another person who will receive it. Qurṭubī says, in his Tafsīr, a large number of Traditions bear testimony to the fact that a believer will receive the reward of the righteous acts of another person. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has, on this occasion, collected all the relevant Traditions which prove that another person does receive the benefit of *Iṣāl-e-Thawāb* (proffering the reward of good acts).

The foregoing verses have elaborated on two issues with reference to the scriptures of Prophets Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام: [1] No one will bear the burden of another's sin and punishment; and [2] No one shall be freed of his Shar'ī obligations, unless he himself performs them. These two rules of law were available in the Shari'ah of all the Prophets. However, they are especially mentioned in relation to Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام probably because in their days an evil custom had taken deep root that the son used to be killed instead of the father; and father, brother, sister or some other member of the family used to be killed instead of the son. The Shari'ah of these prophets abolished all the evil customs of the dark age.

وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى (and that his effort will soon be seen...53:40) In other words, outer actions of a person are not sufficient. Allah will take into account the real, inner motive and driving force behind them whether they were performed with the sincerity of purpose, or they were done with some ulterior motive. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

"Actions shall be judged only by the intentions."

That is, the outer aspect of actions is not sufficient. The inner aspect is also necessary. Actions must be performed purely for the good pleasure of Allah and in compliance with His command.

وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ (and that to your Lord is the end [of every one],... 53:42) This means that ultimately every one will return to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, and give an account of his actions.

Some of the commentators interpret that this statement purports to say that the access of human thought and imagination ends with Allah. The reality of His Being and attributes cannot be discovered by human imagination, because they are beyond conceptualization. Thus we are clearly prohibited from deliberating (See Ma'ariful Qur'ān, Vol.2/pp 277-280 [Tr.]) in His Being and His Attributes. There are narrations that tell us to ponder over the manifestation of His Attributes and bounties, and not to conceptualize His Being and His Attributes or Qualities, the reality of which should be left to the Divine Knowledge only.

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَىٰ (and that He is the One who makes [one] laugh and makes [him] weep,...53:43) Mankind experiences happiness and grief, and consequently laughing and weeping. Man assigns this to the secondary causes [which refer to every existent thing in this universe, and that is where he ends the matter. If we analyze carefully and profoundly, the whole system of cause and effect ends with Allah, the Primary and Supreme Cause. No secondary cause makes anyone happy or sad, nor does it make him to laugh or weep. Both of these things are created by Allah. He created the series of secondary causes and effects in our finite world. But as the Primary and Supreme Cause, He can at any moment make the laughing person weep, and make the weeping person laugh. How well it has been versified!

بگوش گل چرخ گفتہ کن خندان ست..... بعد لب چہ فرمودہ کہ نالان ست

What have You whispered to the ear of a flower (O Allah) whereby it is smiling?

And what have You said to the nightingale whereby it is weeping all the times?

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَغْنَىٰ وَأَقْنَىٰ (and that He is the One who gives wealth and preserves [it]...53:48) The word *ghinā* means affluence, and *ighnā'* means to give wealth to somebody else, and enrich him. The word *aqnā* is derived from *qinyatun* which means preserving and reserve wealth. The meaning of the verse is that it is Allah Who enriches His servants and grants wealth to them to their satisfaction, so that they are able to use some and keep

some in their reserve fund for future use.

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشُّعْرَى (and that He is the One who is the Lord of Sirius ...53:49) The word *shirā* with the diacritical symbol *kasrah* under the letter *shīn* is the name of a star, called Sirius which is behind Jauzā'. Some of the Arab tribes worshipped the mighty star, Sirius, because they regarded it as a source of good or bad luck for them. Allah mentions this star in particular in order to refute their false notion and to affirm that He is the Lord and Master of this star as well, although He is the Creator, Master and Lord of all the stars, heavens and the earth.

وَأَنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا لِأُولَىٰ وَتَمُودًا فَمَا أَتْبَقَى (and that He has destroyed the earlier 'Ād, and Thamūd, so spared none,...53:50-51) The people of 'Ād were among the strongest, fiercest people and the most rebellious against Allah. There are two branches of this people: one of them is known as '*ulā* [the first] and '*ukhrā* [the latter or the second]. Holy Prophet Hūd عليه السلام was sent to 'Ād, but they disobeyed him, as a result Allah annihilated the entire nation by a violently furious wind. This is the first nation that was destroyed in punishment after the destruction of the people of Holy Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام. (Maḥzarī) Holy Prophet Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام was sent to the tribe of Thamūd, being the second 'Ād, but they too disobeyed their Prophet. Those who transgressed were caught by the awesome Cry of Jibra'īl عليه السلام and their hearts were burst by the horrific sound resulting in the mass destruction of those people. (See Ma'āriful Qur'ān Vol. 4/p. 651 and the cross-reference given there. [Tr.])

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَى (And He destroyed the overturned towns also,... 53:53) The word *Mu'tafikah* literally means *mu'talifah* (joined together). These were a few settlements adjacent to the city. Holy Prophet Lūṭ عليه السلام was sent to them. Because of disobedience and commission of shameful and unspeakable sins, their cities [of Sodom and Gomorrah] were turned upside down by Jibra'īl عليه السلام.

فَعَشَّهَا مَا عَشَّتْ (so covered they were by that which covered.... 53:54). This refers to the fact that the cities were first overturned, and after that stones of hard clay were sent down on them, which covered them.

Here ends the teachings of the scriptures of Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَى (Then, which of your Lord's bounties would you dispute?...53:55). *Tamārā* means to dispute and oppose. According to Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, the verse is addressed to every human being. After seeing so many and so clear and invincible arguments in the preceding verses and the Signs in the scriptures of Mūsā and Ibrāhīm عليهما السلام that support and substantiate the claims of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ about the truth of his revelation, the verse says to the obstinate disbelievers: How long will you continue to deny the truth and wander in the wilderness of disbelief? The verse further makes it abundantly clear for those who think and deliberate that there should be no room for any doubt in the Messenger of Allah, his revelation and his teachings. Having heard about the stories of destruction and punishment of past nations, this is an opportune occasion for them to straighten out. This well-timed occasion is a favour of Allah. They should take advantage of it instead of fighting and opposing it.

هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّذِرِ الْأُولَى (This [Holy Prophet] is a warner from the (genus of the) previous warners...53:56). *Hādha* is a demonstrative pronoun and points either to the Holy Prophet ﷺ or to the Qur’ān. With reference to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it means that in the past, many Prophets were sent to their respective nations, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ is sent to all mankind, and he is not a new thing among the Messengers. He is well-established in the straight path. With reference to the Qur’ān, it means that he has come with a book of guidance which, if complied with, assures them of success in this world and in the Hereafter. The opponents should fear the Divine punishment.

أَزِفَتِ الْأَازِفَةُ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ (The Imminent (Hour) has approached. [53:57] There is no one, beside Allah, to remove it...53:58). The verb ‘*azifa*’ is used in the sense of *qaruba* which means to draw near. *‘Azifah* is the feminine active participle from the verb *azifa* and it refers to the Imminent Event. In other words, the Imminent Event has drawn near, referring to the Day of Resurrection. No one besides Allah can prevent it from happening, nor does anyone know when it will happen, except Him. The imminence of Resurrection is in relation to the age of the entire world. The Ummah of Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is right at the end of it near the Day of Judgement.

أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ (Do you then wonder at this

discourse, and laugh [at it], and not weep....53:59-60). The phrase 'this discourse' refers to the Qur'ān. That is, the Qur'ān, the Divine Discourse, which is itself a miracle, has already come to them. They are surprised at it and laugh in jest and mock at it, and do not weep at their sins and shortcomings.

وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ (while you are engaged in vain play?53:61). *Sāmidūn* is the plural of "*sāmid*" from the root word *sumud* which literally denotes to be heedless. *Sāmidūn* is used in the sense of *ghafilun*, meaning unmindful. Some of the Imāms have interpreted the word *sumud* to mean to sing. That meaning can equally fit or apply in this context.

فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا (Now, fall down in prostration and worship [Allah]...53:62). It means that preceding verses have a lesson for everyone who considers them seriously that he should worship Allah and bow down before him in humbleness.

It is recorded in Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse he prostrated, and all those around him also prostrated along with him—Muslims, pagans, Jinns and mankind. Another report from 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, as recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim, narrates that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ finished reciting the Sūrah before a mixed gathering of Muslims and disbelievers, and, along with his followers, he prostrated himself on the ground, the disbelievers too prostrated, except one old Quraishi man who took a handful of soil and, having applied it on his forehead said, "This is enough for me." 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ said that he saw this man later on killed as a disbeliever. Following the example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Muslims were expected to prostrate. As far as the idolaters are concerned, having been profoundly impressed with the solemnity of the occasion and being overawed by the august recitation of the Qur'ānic words, as well as by the Divine Majesty and Glory, might also have fallen in prostration. However, since this prostration was performed in the state of disbelief, it did not carry any reward, but it did leave a deep impression on them; and as a result of this impact, they all later on embraced the Islamic faith, except one person who died in the state of *kufr*, because he arrogantly refrained from performing the *sajdah*.

Ṣaḥīḥain record a report from Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Thābit ؓ to the

effect that he recited the entire Sūrah An-Najm in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but he [the Holy Prophet ﷺ] did not perform the *sajdah*. It does not necessarily follow from this that the *sajdah* is not obligatory or compulsory. It is possible that at that particular moment, he did not have his ablution or there must have been some other legitimate reason for not performing the *sajdah*. In such situations, it is not obligatory to perform the *sajdah* forthwith. It can be delayed until the reason has ceased. And Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Sūrah An-Najm, through the help and grace of Allah, the Pure, the exalted, ended on Friday night 1st Rabi'-uth-Thānī 1391, in one week. Allah willing, this chapter will be followed by Sūrah Al-Qamar. Allah grants success!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Najm
Ends here